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ANNEX III: Political and Economic Costs to the USSR of its Involvement in Africa*

1. When the Soviets weigh the advantages against the political and economic costs in becoming more heavily involved in Africa, they conclude that the risks are worth the gamble. African countries have presented many opportunities to Moscow in recent years because of their political instability, economic backwardness, and lingering resentment toward Western colonial powers. African adventures have brought the Soviets and Cubans closer together over the past three years and Moscow is hopeful that its successes on the continent--particularly in Ethiopia--will reinforce its claim as the champion of progressive forces in Africa and the leader in the world communist movement. The Soviets also hope to translate their activity into predominant influence on the continent. Triumphs in Africa moreover, help to balance setbacks in Egypt, Somalia, and the Sudan as well as the deterioration of Moscow's position in the Middle East over the past several years.

2. There is so far no firm indication, moreover, that the Soviets' assertiveness in Africa is being tempered either by the current level of Western opposition, or by their own awareness that expansion of influence in southern Africa will be more difficult than it has been in the Horn. There are political costs, but Moscow's major concern--how the US reacts--is eased by its assessment that such major issues as SALT are not likely to be affected and that penalties in other areas would be bearable.

3. Soviet expectations in southern Africa are fueled by their perception of the difficulties confronting the US and UK in attempting to broker a nonviolent political settlement in Rhodesia and, further on, in prodding South Africa toward a similar solution. They fear political settlements that would render them irrelevant, although they do not assign them a high probability at this stage. Their own (and Cuban) support for black nationalists reduces the probability that the West can exclude them from the area, and the Kremlin is determined to use its influence and resources to obstruct such an outcome. Should Western political efforts fail,

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Moscow would expect the US to be unable and unwilling to take sides decisively in racial conflicts, either in support of embattled white regimes or of black movements dedicated to overthrowing them. In any event, while the US plays out what Moscow calculates will be a problematic mediating effort, the Soviets will make every effort to assure themselves a voice in the future of Rhodesia and Namibia by establishing themselves as the main external patron of the black nationalists.

4. Nevertheless, Moscow presumably realizes that there are certain uncontrollable factors in the area--which cannot be assessed or even anticipated in advance--that could lead to political costs for the USSR. The moderate Africans' perception of a Soviet grand design in Africa could lead to a more favorable environment for the creation of African regional unity--as in West Africa--as well as reinforcing Western influence. A more pervasive Soviet presence could provoke African popular resentment: there are already indications in Angola that the Russians are beginning to be perceived as neocolonialists interested only in exploiting the country's resources. Soviets and Ethiopians are now sparring over Moscow's attempts to influence internal political developments in Addis Ababa. The recent Katangan invasion of Shaba province not only enhances the moderate African perception of Soviet perfidy, but threatens to complicate Soviet relations with the West. The strong reaction of the French to the Katangan invasion within NATO councils, and the subsequent Franco-US consultations, could lead to some weakening of Franco-Soviet ties.

5. Soviet assertiveness in the Horn has not yet seriously damaged Moscow's interests in the Middle East, because of USSR's Arab friends--even those who back Somalia--have given their need for Soviet support against Israel a much higher priority than events in the Horn. Soviet support for a protracted war in Eritrea, however, has drawn an adverse reaction from many Arab quarters, including such Soviet clients as Iraq, Syria, and possibly Algeria and Libya. Moscow's need for Iraqi facilities for its airlift to Addis Ababa, as well as Soviet interest in Iraqi oil, places severe limitations on the pressure it can apply against Baghdad. Syria, bowing to Soviet pressure, stopped aiding Somalia, but refuses to halt its aid to the Eritreans, despite Soviet entreaties.

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6. In addition to opposition from both conservative and radical Arabs, the Soviets may anticipate some difficulties over Eritrea at the summer session of the Organization of African Unity. African opinion generally tolerant of Moscow's behavior in the Ogaden, where the Soviets were seen to be helping one African state fend off attack from another; but most African states regard the Eritrean problem as an internal Ethiopian matter. Moscow's direct involvement in Eritrea could lead to a split in OAU ranks.

7. The Soviets are facing difficulties in the Rhodesian situation because of President Kaunda's resistance to introducing additional Cubans to Zambia, ZAPU strongman Nkomo's unwillingness to close the door to the Anglo-American plan, and Mozambique President Machel's inability to convince ZAPU and ZANU to coordinate their military actions. The Soviets will also confront political problems in Angola over the longer run because of the pathetic situation of the Angolan economy, the increase in popular discontent, and the cabinet split between a pro-Soviet faction and those advocating a more nonaligned foreign policy and a less radical domestic program. Jonas Savimbi's UNITA poses a growing political and military threat to the Neto regime which may eventually require additional Cuban troops.

8. Over the longer term, moreover, the Soviets may face more complex military and political problems in Africa, and more Cubans may eventually be needed to stabilize the situations in Ethiopia and Angola, and to achieve a military victory for black nationalists in Rhodesia. The political costs for the Soviets would then begin to rise. The increasing "Cubanization" of the continent could have an increasing negative effect not only upon those forces already opposed to Soviet policy--conservative Arabs, Iran, and the West--but also upon moderate Africans. Castro may eventually place some limits on Cuba's presence and involvement.

9. There is no real evidence that the tangible costs of Moscow's increased involvement in Africa are a substantial burden on Soviet resources. It is, in fact, probable that one of the attractions of pursuing African opportunities may be the relatively low cost of exploiting them compared, say, to the price tag of further Soviet efforts to purchase a stable foothold with the Arabs. On the military side, neither the economic costs nor the drain on military resources

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appear to represent a significant constraint on Soviet activities. From 1975 through 1977 the value of Soviet military assistance commitments to sub-Saharan African states totaled about \$1,600 million and deliveries about \$1,150 million. The bulk of these agreements provide for payment within 10 to 12 years, and therefore represent a recoverable expenditure. Indeed, Moscow has in some cases been able to recoup some of the investment in arms that might otherwise be junked. Soviets arms transfers to Africa--where even old technology is frequently advanced--has not limited Soviet ability to meet domestic and Warsaw Pact requirements. Nor has the commitment of 2,500 - 3,000 Soviet military personnel in Africa had any noticeable impact of Soviet manpower availability. Even such high-visibility efforts as the Angolan and Ethiopian airlifts, moreover, were accomplished without noticeable disruption of routine military preparedness and have provided a significant bonus in crew and unit training for distant operations.

10. In the area of economic assistance the Soviets have also limited the costs of their involvement. Soviet extensions of economic aid to sub-Saharan Africa, in fact, have declined in the last three years, and totaled only \$21.3 million in 1977. (East European extensions of credit, meanwhile, have risen significantly to \$108.7 million last year, suggesting that the Soviets may have tasked their Warsaw Pact allies with more of the economic burden in Africa.) Nor is there evidence that the provision of technical experts to Africa or the training of Africans in the USSR has had any significant impact on Soviet resources.

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